



Churchill's visits to Epsom

In 1903 Winston Churchill, then the MP for Oldham, visited Epsom College and unveiled a memorial stained glass window in memory of the Old Epsomians who had died in the Boer War. The memorial stained glass window was commissioned and paid for by Old Epsomians and designed by Francis Oldaker. Oldaker was an Old Epsomian and stained glass artist, he lived locally and is buried in Epsom's Ashley Road cemetery.



Unveiled by Winston Churchill. Image courtesy Epsom College

Winston Churchill was a fan of horse raising and attended the Epsom Derby on 4 June 1949 with his wife Clementine. He became Sir Winston in 1953.

I'm hoping that readers will be able throw light on a plaster bust of Churchill created by Churchill's only female cousin, Clare Sheridan in 1943.



Clare Sheridan was a “colourful” character who established herself as a successful sculptor of portrait busts; her sitters included her then lover, the actor Charlie Chaplin together with H G Wells, Lord Asquith, Trotsky and Lenin. Her involvement with prominent Russians led to her being placed under surveillance by British intelligence much to the embarrassment of Churchill and his political colleagues who urged him to stay away from her.

Sheridan’s bronze busts of her first cousin Churchill were created during World War 2, but only after Sheridan threatened to commit suicide outside 10 Downing Street if Churchill failed to allow her to sculpt him. Examples of her bronze busts of Sir Winston Churchill can be found at Churchill’s former home, Chartwell as well as at Blenheim Palace, Harrow School and Hastings Town Hall, but the whereabouts of a smaller bust created by Clare Sheridan especially for Churchill’s wife, Clementine is not known.

References to Clare Sheridan’s bronze busts of Sir Winston Churchill can be found in quite a few of Churchill’s WW2 letters, but having studied all the relevant letters in great detail, I have not been able to find out anything about the smaller plaster bust which I purchased at a London estate sale.

Could it be that the 9-inch-high plaster bust of Sir Winston Churchill that I acquired at an estate sale is the small bust of Sir Winston Churchill that wartime letters confirm was given to Churchill’s wife, Clementine by Clare Sheridan?

Please contact The Epsom and Ewell Times if you have any information about Clare Sheridan’s small plaster bust of Sir Winston Churchill.

Suffragette stage play review

Sarah Dewing, who initiated the statue of Emily Davison in Epsom’s Market Square reviews “**Emmeline**” a play about the foremost British suffragette, Emmeline Pankhurst, and the fight for the vote for women at the start of the 20th century.

“Emmeline” was performed at Esher Theatre on 24th and 25th February, as part of a tour that began in Oxford and will end in Manchester on 8th March, International Women’s Day, It is the debut play of young playwright and actor Beatrice Hyde, who also played Sylvia Pankhurst in the production. It was staged by the Theatre Lab Company, a London-based theatre company and was directed by Its Artistic Director, Anastasia Revi.

Beatrice condensed thirty years of suffragette history into two and a half hours, which sounds intense, but the interval broke it up nicely. She spent five years researching the Pankhursts and the events that took place around the struggle for government acceptance of women’s suffrage.

The play focused on the relationships between the newly widowed Emmeline and her three daughters, Christobel, Adela and in particular, Sylvia. Her relationship with her mother becomes increasingly fractious as the strategies pursued by the Women’s Social and Political Union, founded by Emmeline, become increasingly at odds with her socialist principles. These were encouraged further by her relationship with the founder of the Labour movement, Keir Hardie.

At the same time as we are let into the Pankhurst family dynamics, we are shown their social and political context including the debate around the cause between prominent politicians of the day and many of the stand-out events during the suffragette era, including the actions of Emily Wilding Davison at the Epsom Derby in 1913.

The play was well acted by a diverse cast of actors, with a stand-out performance by Georgie Rhys as Emmeline in particular. Direction was impressive, given the sheer intensity of the plot, and coordination of all the different aspects of the production.

The set was very simple but effective, with a two-tier stage with raised platforms at the rear and sides, minimalist lighting and a variety of props that often acted as symbols rather than literal objects. The sound design accompanying the production was an important aspect of the overall impact of the play, with several authentic and beautifully sung suffragette songs. reprieved throughout the play to rousing effect.

I loved the use of the background presence of an actor portrayed as the “heroic woman” motif throughout the play, representing the movement and its ups and downs. This was inspired by an illustration on the front page of an original Suffragette newspaper. I also thought the sound design and production really took the play to a different level.



Emily Davison Statue and the play Emmeline

For me, the psychological aspects of the play highlighted the personal costs, as well as rewards and triumphs, that are paid by those in single-minded pursuit of a mission to the exclusion of all else, including health, safety and relationships with loved ones. The play alludes to Emmeline's drive to finish the work started by her beloved husband as the source of this obsession.

Ironically, without those like Emmeline and her daughters, who willingly devote their lives to a cause, social progress could not happen. In this case, women would not have the rights they have today, even if there is still a way to go. This is brought home to the present day at the end with a scene where Emmeline is portrayed as her statue outside the Houses of Parliament. This play is an impressive debut for Beatrice Hyde, but also a production that I would highly recommend for anyone with an interest in 20th Century history, women's rights and psychological drama.

Sarah Dewing
Chair
Emily Davison Memorial Project

Mole Valley Local Plan paused: official

Inspectors have agreed to pause the examination of Mole Valley's 6,000 home blueprint amid attempts to remove all green belt sites for development.

Mole Valley District Council had written to the Planning Inspectorate asking to remove all green belt sites from its draft local plan in anticipation of government changes to the planning system. But these hopes have been dashed by the inspector on the grounds it could not prejudge any prospective changes. Despite the setback, the inspector said they would be happy to delay hearings until May - when any new rule changes become clearer- and that is where things stand.

Local plans are the basis for planning decisions in an area. They outline the type, location and density of development that is likely to be permitted. Without one, developers have much freer range to chance their arms.

The council also does not have a five year housing land supply, which again tips the favour towards developers and increases the urgency with which Mole Valley District Council needs to get its local plan signed off.

Mole Valley District Council's leader member for planning, Councillor Margaret Cooksey, said that, while disappointed the local plan has been delayed yet again it is a better outcome than having to start the process from scratch. She said: "I am disappointed we are having to pause and delay. The longer we are without an adopted plan the more at risk our green sites are. If we carry on we have to work on current National Planning Policy Framework rules and greenfield sites we have in the plan. That is what we are trying to prevent. But if we just abandon the current plan we would have to start from scratch and that would take a lot longer. We don't want to lose the good parts of the draft plan."

She said they have already received an application to build on one of the green belt sites they are trying to remove from the local plan.

The planning inspector agreed to delay examination of the local plan until May 25 at which time there should be greater clarity around future national planning policy and will also accommodate the implications of the council's all out local elections in May.

Related reports:

Lessons for Epsom in Mole Valley's "shouty" Local Plan struggle?



How Green is My Mole Valley?

Can Epsom and Ewell get more dense?

After Ronnie Scott's? Epsom of course!

Fresh from their 'Two for the Road' concert at **Ronnie Scott's**, internationally renowned virtuoso jazz guitarist visiting from Norway, **Frode Kjekstad** is pairing up with local legend **Nigel Price**. Together with Italian drum sensation **Laura Klain** and the brilliant **Mikele Montolli** on double bass, they will give a special live concert in the heart of Epsom on **Saturday 11th March**.

Epsom Jazz Club, resident in the Oaks Room, Church Street, Epsom has sold out all its regular Tuesday concerts this season. So this is the last chance to enjoy the unique cabaret seated venue until next season starts in May. A real taste of the world famous Ronnie Scott atmosphere and music brought to your own Town.

Frode has wowed audiences whilst playing alongside heavyweight jazz stars such as Dr Lonnie Smith, Mike LeDonne and Eric Alexander.

Epsom Jazz Club advises buy your tickets in advance. Go to www.epsomjazzclub.com for tickets.

Sue Bull - a special lady. An obituary.

Susan Helen Bull (Sue) was born in January 1958 in Dorset but her family moved back to Berkshire in the mid-1960s. Born into a farming community she and her older brother were the first in the family to go to university and Sue graduated in Economics from London University. She worked at Eversheds in the City of London as a Company Secretary and then moved to Epsom in 1982.

She was an active member of Christ Church (Epsom) for many years, becoming a very successful churchwarden, which led to a calling to ordained ministry. She was appointed Curate at St Barnabas Church in 1998 and continued to have a close association with the parish in her later work as a chaplain at both Surrey and Borders NHS Trust and Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust. For several years she continued to lead St Barnabas Church on a voluntary basis while the church appointed a new vicar, leading worship and facilitating the church's wider links to the local community.

As a mental health chaplain, she saw the pain and lack of community support for the people discharged from mental hospitals and for people suffering from mental ill-health generally. A lifetime calling started, first founding the Monday drop-in in collaboration with St Barnabas Church, later founding the Love Me Love My Mind charity in 2008 and acting as Chair until her death in December 2022. The charity is run entirely by volunteers and is funded by grants and donations; it aims to break down stigma and inspire understanding about mental health.

At a time when very few spoke about mental health, Sue championed this cause, building a strong community in the Monday drop-in and raising awareness through the Epsom Mental Health and Wellbeing Festival. This annual event went from being a table in Epsom marketplace handing out leaflets, to a full week of activities with high-profile expert speakers. As it grew, Sue organised the festival in collaboration with other charities in Epsom and ran it with an army of volunteers. She was always an extremely competent, professional but unassuming leader. Sue had a flair for building connections. She was totally inclusive and developed an extensive network across every sector in our local community as well as nationally. The festival has been recognised nationally as a unique community engagement model, visited by NHS England and serving as a model for other areas.

Sue was an intellectual with a clear purpose. She studied Theology in Switzerland, gained a Masters in Theology from Dublin and was in the process of writing a PhD thesis about mental health and the Church. Her compassionate, deep spirituality was recognised when she became a chaplain for Westminster Abbey in 2018 and was part of the official prayer support for the late Queen's funeral.



Sue's loving, calm and self-effacing exterior hid a rooted commitment, strong sense of justice and steely determination for her calling, which at times could make her (as she would humorously say with a twinkle) 'more than a little awkward' for the benefit of others.

Sue did not have children, but through her calling became a supporting mother figure to many. She leaves behind two grieving families – her natural and acquired one.

Epsom has lost a very special lady.

You can find out much more about the Charity Sue inspired on the website linked here: [Love Me Love My Mind](#)

Epsom and Ewell FC wandering to top table?

Epsom & Ewell FC 1-0 Dorking Wanderers B. Southern Combination League – Division One. Tuesday 28th February.

As a supporter, it is sometimes easy to forget after an awful performance that the players are hurting too and on Tuesday evening they were able to consign that East Preston defeat to history with a fine 1-0 win over a Dorking Wanderers B team that we had failed to defeat since November 2018, courtesy of a Jaevon Dyer penalty that he earned himself midway through the first half.

And without doubt, despite much improved performances across the board, Dyer was the star turn in this contest, threatening on the attack and even putting in a good defensive shift when he was without the ball.

Dorking Wanderers B came into this match on the back of claiming thirteen points out of the fifteen available since the Christmas fixtures; a run that started at our expense at the start of January. However, this result enabled our boys to leapfrog them into second place and we were given an added bonus when unbeaten leaders Shoreham slipped up at home to Selsey the same evening, ensuring that they are not yet completely out of sight in the race for the title.

There were a number of changes from Saturday's defeat. Captain Ryan Smith was absent, while Kevin Moreno-Gomez and Oliver Thompson came back into the defence at the expense of Alex Penfold and Dylan Merchant-Simmonds who were on the bench. Dyer came back into the starting line up alongside Mario Quiassaca and the surprising re-appearance of Jaan Stanley, as the club had announced this week that he had been recalled by Raynes Park Vale! With these two on the field we appeared much more of a threat and started the game brightly.

Stanley's left wing cross was clawed away from danger by Jacob Teddy the visiting keeper as early as the third minute and although chances were limited in this period, the balance of play was well in our favour and it looked like if any team were going to score, it would be us. And so it proved when Athan Smith-Joseph made tracks on the left and his low ball in deflected upwards. As a defender went to clear the ball, Dyer got in front of him and was promptly brought down in the penalty area, picking himself up to score a confident penalty in the 26th minute; his first spot kick for the club and his first goal since finding the net against Billingshurst in October.

Dorking's only real opportunity of the first half came with a low shot that was deflected just wide of our post but the corner was cleared and we went in at the break without any more concerns.

We clearly weren't prepared to settle on that single goal lead as we came out for the second half and took the match to our opponents in search of that second goal. Smith-Joseph sent a low shot in after good work from Dyer but Teddy made an easy save and Dyer turned provider for Quiassaca a few minutes later, although again Teddy wasn't really tested when the shot came in.

We then fashioned a pair of really good chances and Smith-Joseph will be wondering how he didn't take one of them if not both. In the 61st minute Dyer made another great run on the right wing and his low ball across goal found our striker just six yards out, but his shot struck the post and went out for a goal kick. Then four minutes later Dyer again stretched the full back before laying the ball back to Gideon Acheampong to deliver to the far post where Smith-Joseph somehow sent his header wide from six yards!

This was a shame as we certainly deserved a second goal and the absence of one ensured that the final ten minutes would be a little more nervy than they needed to be, although we had one more good chance in that closing period when a clever flick from Quiassaca set Stanley through and he set up Dyer whose shot was well blocked.

Ultimately, Dorking Wanderers failed to carry a real threat on goal in the absence of their main striker Ben Aubrey and so our first half goal would prove sufficient to claim the points and gain a measure of revenge for our late loss there by the same score in



January.

It seems odd to be talking about the Shoreham defeat on the same evening, when they remain eight points ahead of us with a far superior goal difference, even though we do hold a game in hand, as we have some very difficult matches ahead of us, not least Selsey on Saturday who will be flying after handing the leaders their first defeat of the season and where around 200 largely partisan supporters will be present to ensure their good form continues. However, we just need to focus on our own form and we'll see where that takes us. In the meantime, credit is due to our players for finally defeating a team that have given us a lot of trouble in recent seasons.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong (c), Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Nick Wilson, Chris Boulter, Ollie Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Mario Quiassaca, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Rory Edwards for Dyer (86), George Owusu for Quiassaca (92)

Podcast problem leads to PC sacking

A Surrey Police officer was dismissed without notice after he made a podcast in which his wording suggested he "condoned committing criminal acts of domestic abuse". The officer, who cannot be named due to reporting restrictions and is referred to as Officer A, uploaded an episode of his podcast in January 2022 in which he discussed a non-crime domestic incident with his ex-partner that took place on Christmas Day 2021, following an argument over child contact that day.

A Surrey Police misconduct hearing on 8 February 2023 found his behaviour was a breach of discreditable conduct and dismissed him without notice. During the podcast uploaded to Spotify on 10 January 2022, but since deleted, Officer A discussed the Christmas Day 2021 incident, and "made a number of inappropriate comments referring to his ex-partner", according to the hearing outcome.

The report into the hearing said: "During the podcast he also used discussion and wording which suggested that he condones committing criminal acts of domestic abuse." Surrey Police said the officer accepted the allegations made against him, but that he had experienced a "difficult break-up with his former partner". He said this as well as "frustrations regarding his access to their child" were the context in which he recorded the podcast.

Surrey Police said: "The panel accepted the officer's explanation that by the words he used he was not condoning domestic abuse but the impact on the public view may well be different given the ongoing national concern regarding violence against women and girls and the level of mistrust some have with the police in such matters."

The officer, who cannot legally be named because of restrictions put in place at the hearing, identified himself as a police officer in the podcast on April 23, 2020 and as a Surrey officer in the introduction of a previous podcast.

The panel found him to have breached the professional standard of duties and responsibilities (being diligent in the exercise of their duties and responsibilities) in this regard.

A member of the public alerted Surrey Police to "inappropriate content on social media" on April 23, 2020, which was dealt with by the officer's senior management team and the content was removed.

Surrey Police add: "The officer is not being named to protect the welfare of his former partner and child, who played no part in the officer's alleged misconduct. This will ensure the correct balance is maintained between the open process as envisaged by the Regulations and Home Office Guidance and the welfare of either the officer or others".

Hook Road Arena plans

This is the last of nine reports on the BIG PLANS for Epsom and Ewell proposed in the **DRAFT LOCAL PLAN** that is out for public consultation till 17th March. We do not intend to state any support or opposition but may ask some questions.



Hook Road Arena is owned by the Council and has for many years been the home of car boot sales, funfairs and annual firework nights. The plan is for residential and sports and recreation development, comprising:

- A new sports hub for the borough to include playing pitches (grass and artificial) a new pavilion and changing facilities on 9.5ha of the site that will be retained within the Green Belt.
- At least 150 net zero carbon homes on the eastern part of the site that will be inset from the Green Belt

The reasons given include the site has the potential to deliver recreational sports facilities and playing pitches. The allocation of this site will mitigate any losses of playing pitches (rugby) resulting from the allocation of the adjoining Ewell East Station (see our report [HERE](#)) . It may also help to meet additional playing pitch needs for 'secure provision' (i.e. community use protected through a legal agreement) both now and in the future.

The site will contribute towards meeting the need for housing in the borough.

When will the site be developed?

It expected that a planning application will be submitted early in the plan period, with development likely to start in 2027.

Planning officers note that any development proposal will need to incorporate mitigation relating to surface water flooding for those parts of the site that are susceptible. Also, the site could deliver playing pitches and potentially other supporting infrastructure such as changing facilities and a club house.

Related reports:

The BIG plans for Epsom and Ewell – reports on Hook Road Car Park and SGN site plan.

Depot Road plans

West Park

Ashley Avenue

The Epsom and Ewell Town Hall plan

A new Town Hall for Epsom and Ewell?

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Draft Local Plan. Details how to submit your views.



Local Plan battle heating up? and other related reports.

Epsom and Ewell pressed on.

Epsom & Ewell 1-2 East Preston. Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 25th February.

Whatever happened to Fortress Fetcham Grove? Last season we won eleven in a row and this term we opened up with five straight wins. Yet nowadays, we are lucky if we can win any at all. Our win against ten man Arundel was the only one we have won since late October and our latest loss on Saturday against East Preston regrettably was almost identical to our last Saturday home match against Oakwood where our play was slow, lacking urgency and was completely toothless up front, allowing the opposition to believe they might have a chance, which they then took.

In terms of personnel there were further changes from the midweek win over Arundel and most notable was the absence of our prolific striker Jamie Byatt, who had of course scored the winner on Wednesday. Dylan Merchant-Simmonds came in for his first start and paired up with Chris Boulter at the back with Ollie Thompson moving to the bench, while Nick Wilson returned to the starting eleven after missing the Arundel match in place of the absent Thompson Adeyemi. George Owusu came in for his first start in place of the battered and bruised Jaevon Dyer who was placed on the bench in the hope that he would be able to have ninety minutes off before Tuesday's match against Dorking Wanderers, but he would also be forced into action as we chased the game in the later stages.

Finally, Tyreke Leslie came in, although due to the absence of Byatt he was placed in a more central position to that where we would previously seen him play and it didn't appear to suit him. It is strange that we have tried a number of players in that role from Josh Owen, Jubril Adamson, Josh Alder, Byatt, Dyer and most recently Jaan Stanley who was absent for this match, yet the guy who played there successfully in pre-season still hasn't been given a run at centre-forward in competitive action and so Athan Smith-Joseph instead lined up once again on the wing instead, although he was on the right for this match to accommodate Owusu on the left and this rendered him less effective than usual too.

The encounter settled into a fairly clear pattern as we held the ball most of the time, while the opposition relied on occasional counter attacks. Our first chance fell to Owusu in the tenth minute, but he hooked the ball over the bar from fairly close range and also struggled to stay onside in the first half. Leslie was on the end of a flick on, but his shot was deflected wide, according to the referee at least, as clearly the entire East Preston defence didn't agree, and regrettably the erratic officiating in this match would be another factor in this frustrating encounter.

We had forced a couple of corners and looked generally in control in these early stages, although a miscommunication between Alex Penfold and Merchant-Simmonds allowed Jack Collins to get through on goal. Fortunately, some good recovery defending ensured that their player was unable to get a shot away, however, this appeared to give the visitors some belief and they fizzed another ball across our six yard box before taking the lead in embarrassing circumstances in the 25th minute. I hope Gary Jarman got this one on his video as the players should watch it back again and again. Quite simply, a long throw was flicked on to the far post where Matthew Wilson was standing completely alone and seemed to have ages to guide his header past the helpless Tom Theobald from about six yards. It was the sort of goal you see conceded in the park on a Sunday morning and was horrible to witness from a club at our level.

We responded well and were back on level terms within three minutes as a Ryan Smith corner was blocked almost on the line and Owusu was there to tuck away the loose ball from a few yards out. In first half injury time both teams had an opportunity, first when Collins fed the ball through to Morgan Day, but his hooked volley went straight at Theobald, then at the other end Smith-Joseph produced one of his trademark mazy runs before unleashing a shot that was well tipped over by Maciek Kason, although Smith's corner then went straight out of play, which sort of summed up the first half.

Unfortunately the second half was an equally disjointed and dispiriting affair if you were an Epsom supporter. We had hardly been playing six minutes when we had a shout for a foul that wasn't given, but Gavin Quintyne felt the need to say something to the referee and ended up in the sin-bin as a result. His absence didn't materially affect the pattern of play and the scores were still level when he re-joined the contest, but it was ten minutes wasted as we created little in that period. Just after the hour Leslie was withdrawn and replaced by the returning Kofi Quartey and the visitors had another opportunity when a half cleared free kick was blazed over from the edge of the penalty area. A couple of bookings followed, firstly for Ryan Harvey and then extremely harshly for Wilson, who didn't even commit a foul as far as I was concerned.

We sent in another corner where a Boulter header was blocked not far short of the goal line before Quartey had the chance of the



afternoon after being put through one on one, but he overran the ball a bit and by the time he got the shot away, Kason was out to block. We would regret this ten minutes later when in the 86th minute a hopeful right wing cross appeared to be flicked on by one of our own defenders and fell kindly for the unmarked Harvey to fire a smart volley past Theobald from around ten yards. It was a good finish but the absence of any marking made the job somewhat easier.

Two minutes later and despite having previously seen Quintyne sin-binned, Boulter decided to also say something to the referee and predictably then found himself on the bench meaning that we would play the last two minutes and eight further minutes of injury time with ten men. I have referred to indiscipline in this team frequently this season, but to lose two “experienced” players for ten minutes each, was inexcusable. Yes, the refereeing was poor and yes, he looked out of his depth in this match, particularly in the second half, but our players have to be a bit more accountable for their own actions.

So East Preston won their fourth match in a row and deserve some credit for sticking around in the match that we should have finished off earlier, but let’s make no bones about this, both teams were poor in this match and it was a fairly disappointing advert for Step Six football. No wonder there were only 75 there to see it.

With just ten matches remaining, time is running out now and we have three far more difficult looking fixtures coming up against teams that are notably better than a limited East Preston. We face a difficult trip to Selsey at the weekend, and either side of that we host two in-form teams in Godalming Town and of course, our nemesis, Dorking Wanderers B coming up next. In my view (and hey, it’s my report!) we are very much at a crossroads here in our season. Which direction will we take? The path to second place in the table that we will surely claim if we are able to secure at least seven points from these next matches, or will we stumble erratically through the rest of the season before losing an away playoff match like we did last season. As a supporter, well aware that the club is spending a lot of money that is running out, I at the very least want to see better than what we witnessed here. Promotion to Step Five is still comfortably achievable, but not with performances like this. It has to stop now.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Alex Penfold, Ryan Smith (c), Chris Boulter, Dylan Merchant-Simmonds, George Owusu, Nick Wilson, Tyreke Leslie, Gavin Quintyne, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Kofi Quartey for Leslie (62), Jaevon Dyer for Owusu (68), Steve Springett for Penfold (77), Ollie Thompson for Smith (89)

Sutton and Epsom RFC Sink Despite All Hands On Deck

Brighton 39 Sutton & Epsom 22. Saturday 25th February. The last of Epsom and Sutton’s rearranged fixtures sadly fell on a weekend that not only featured the Six Nations but also a couple of stag weekends. Creativity was the byword for selection as 2nd XV players, veterans of yesteryear, coaches and university students gathered at Waterhall for the formal introductions before taking on the Blues. In September at Rugby Lane the Black &

Whites enjoyed one of only two successes this campaign when they overcame Brighton 42-24. The south coast men gained a measure of revenge winning 39-22 which eased their fears of the drop but the result relegated S&E because remarkably at Bodicote Park Banbury had defeated second-placed Camberley.

The Sutton and Epsom XV included the veteran trio of Frankie Murray and the brothers Pointing, Chris and Mickey, debutants Jordan Farrar and Alex Gerhard from the Swallows, students Jack Benton and Taylor Gaye and coaches Steve Munford and Mark Lambert. Tom Brooker took the armband and was the only remaining member of the pack from last Saturday’s Havant loss. The clouds dispersed and the game started in sunshine but with a strong wind that was illustrated as the Brighton kick off sailed out on the full. The majority of the crowd wisely took advantage of the well-appointed clubhouse rather than braving the elements pitch-side for a match of great significance for both clubs in terms of survival in this league. The hosts looked to spread the ball from the outset and their back division with Onke Nesi to the fore was lively and threatening. S&E tackled ferociously and the pack willingly took on the ball-carrying duties.

After ten minutes winger Aled Edwards thought he had wriggled free but was brought back for a foot in touch. The Waterhall woes were immediately abated when centre Arthur Robinson scythed through the defence after sustained Brighton pressure to score. In the absence of the redoubtable Sean O’Hagan scrum half Harry Alexander took over the kicking duties and made



light of the tricky wind to make it 7-0. Five minutes later the Sutton resources were further stretched when Kyren Ghumra was forced off after a knock on the head when falling on the ball. With no spare back on the bench Jordan Farrar went on the flank and Jack Butt stood in on the wing. Despite the adversity the Black & Whites were tenacious in defence and the forwards relished the set scrums with the experienced duo of Reid and Lambert winning penalties.

The Sussex men had to wait until the half hour to extend their lead. A well-worked lineout ploy from 5 metres was thwarted but prop Billy Rolfe twisted and stretched for the line to score. The conversion drifted wide as the hosts led 12-0. Sutton & Epsom brought on Hartpury University prop Taylor Gaye for his debut and he made an immediate impact. The diminutive Dan Jones won a penalty for a high tackle which was kicked into the corner. Though the lineout was lost excellent scavenging by the pack regained possession and Taylor Gaye scored from short-range. The conversion was blown wide but Sutton were on the board trailing 5-12. Confidence now surged through the Black & White ranks and they were soon attacking in the Blues 22. With the interval rapidly approaching the referee issued a yellow card to Billy Rolfe. At once Sutton looked to benefit from their numerical advantage. The forwards got to within a yard under the posts before it was spun wide. It appeared that Angus Findlay had scored in the corner but an excellent defensive covering tackle dislodged the ball as the winger tried to touch down. Brighton cleared their lines from the scrum and the referee concluded the first period with the Blues 12-5 up at the break. If S&E were despondent at their failure to score before the interval you would not have noticed by the way they started the second half. Robbie Martey caught a clearance on halfway and advanced towards the 22. Captain Brooker kept up the attack and ball came to Dan Jones who jinked his way to the line and passed to Frankie Murray who scored a try that rolled back the years. The conversion narrowly missed but Sutton were only 10-12 down with the extra man.

Before the travelling Rugby Lane faithful had time to dream of a remarkable victory they were awoken from their reverie by an instant reply from the Waterhall men. Having secured a scrum on the 22 from the restart the ball went out to Arthur Robinson who ran the perfect line to score his second and Brighton's third try. Harry Alexander added the extras for the 19-10 lead. Conditions deteriorated rapidly as the clouds gathered, the rain fell and the temperature plummeted with half an hour remaining on the clock.

The hosts began to turn the screw with two tries in as many minutes. First to benefit was returning prop Billy Rolfe who collected his second of the afternoon after relentless pressure from the Sussex men. Moments later Aled Edwards was touching down in the corner and the Black & Whites were 29-10 adrift. Entering the final quarter the impartial observer might have thought that the visitors may have run out of steam and the veterans made to suffer. The floodgates did not open and contrary to all expectations S&E began their rearguard action. The next score was an unlikely one when Brighton decided to kick a penalty with ten minutes remaining. Harry Alexander effortlessly bisected the uprights for 32-10 leaving the visitors needing four scores. The task went from uphill to climbing Everest in flip-flops when replacement Conor Scott sped in under the posts finishing with aplomb. Harry Alexander converted for 39-10.

Then Tom Brooker gave a splendid example of leading from the front. Gathering the ball near halfway he took the ball in to contact and drove back three defenders and broke through their clutches and bolted towards the posts. He finished in style brushing aside the last tackler as if he was Alex Dombrandt. Alex Mawdsley drop-kicked the conversion in a blink of an eye for 39-17. Sutton now went in search of a bonus point and took the game to Brighton. Unfortunately scrum half Austin Bell was forced off with an ankle injury and S&E shuffled the deck again. Undaunted by this setback they invaded the opposition 22 again. Quick ball was spun wide and Alex Mawdsley forced his way over. Whether he applied the coup de grace or the significant pressure was supplied by Robbie Martey was immaterial as the referee signalled a try. Alex Mawdsley failed to convert from the flank and the referee blew his whistle to end the game with Brighton victorious by 39-22.

The Blues were worthy winners. Their forwards carried aggressively and effectively and their backs looked to run at every opportunity and had plenty of pace to exploit their somewhat makeshift opponents. The bonus point win was most welcome as the hosts are still not clear of relegation. In contrast this defeat condemned the visitors to the drop. However, the manner of defeat will be



cherished by the Rugby Lane supporters. The level of commitment, the tenacity and the bonus point were highlights in a display overflowing with team spirit. Steve Munford gave an outstanding performance in defence tackling all-comers. The many front row permutations were a constant menace in the scrum. The side benefited greatly from the leadership on the pitch from not only Tom Brooker but also the cadre of experienced players that filled their ranks. On the other end of the scale, the youthful debutants Alex Gerhard, Jordan Farrar and Taylor Gayle put in huge shifts and looked very comfortable at 1st XV level which bodes well for the future.

Though the season has come to a premature end for Sutton & Epsom, followers of Brighton will hope Wimbledon and Havant will reflect their lofty status and put Banbury to the sword unlike the faltering Camberley so that the Blues stay put in Regional One South Central. Next Saturday S&E entertain Maidenhead at Rugby Lane in the penultimate game of the season.

Sutton & Epsom

Robbie Martey, Kyren Ghumra, Steve Munford, Alex Mawdsley, Angus Findlay, Frankie Murray, Austin Bell, Mark Lambert, Dan Jones, Joe Reid, Alex Gerhard, Jack Benton, Chris Pointing, Jack Butt & Tom Brooker ©

Replacements: (all used) Mickey Pointing, Jordan Farrar & Taylor Gaye.

Brighton

Max Morris ©, George Payne, Arthur Robinson, Onke Nesi, Aled Edwards, David McIlwaine, Harry Alexander, Billy Rolfe, Will Fitzpatrick, Andrew Rowlandson, Richard Neil, Milo Cawkwell, George Orchard, Alex Havers & Angus North.

Replacements: James Trevis, Will Harvey and Conor Scott.